



Hofstra Head Coach, Tom Shifflet

While the Hofstra wrestlers are home for the summer, Coach Shifflet does not have the same fortune. Shifflet, along with his coaching staff of Rob Anspach, Joe Dubuque and Chris Weidman are busy ensuring a bright future for the Pride as they undertake recruiting and fundraising.

After the conclusion of a high school wrestler's senior year, they have an important decision to make, the decision of whether to hang up their singlet or continue wrestling on the college level.



Shifflet believes that almost anyone can survive at a Division 1 program; however, the impact they make is solely up to the individual. He can sympathize with those wrestlers who feel that they do not have the credentials to compete, as he recalled how walk-on freshman Jeff Rotella struggled to adjust to the competition. Jeff Rotella, with the support of his coaches and teammates along with his relentless hard work eventually broke into the starting lineup as a freshman. However he says "There are no

guarantees in this sport." Also if you decide to make the commitment to wrestle in college, you should not just attend a school that offers wrestling but join a team where you can be certain you will be surrounded by the right people to ensure that you reach your full potential. When making your decision, Coach Shifflet reminds athletes that there are many factors they must take into consideration when choosing a school. You must take into consideration your financial status, your relationship with your future coaches and teammates, the wrestling program as a whole and most importantly your opportunity for academic success, because ultimately that's what will influence your future the most.

When his athletes first arrive on campus in the fall, they each take a varying amount of time to adjust both to college and wrestling for a Division 1 program. Shifflet finds that his local wrestlers have an easier time adjusting to his program because they are close to a support structure of both family and friends, while it may take slightly longer for the wrestlers without that support structure to make the adjustment. "The most important aspect of coaching our freshmen is instilling a positive mentality, a mentality that says I may be a third string guy but

I'm at a place where I can become a national champion," says Shifflet. In that aspect, Hofstra has an edge on many other programs because of the number of All-Americans they have produced along with the fact that their assistant coach has accomplished that task twice.

The Hofstra staff has been working tirelessly to recruit the top wrestlers; however, there are many different aspects of recruiting that most people are unaware of. The first phase of recruiting is finding the wrestlers needed for their program. One of the most important attributes that attracts Shifflet to a recruit, besides their credentials, is the athlete's interest in the program. The coaching staff does not always look for the best wrestler but the right wrestler. Because of the academic demands that Hofstra presents, they seek out the student athlete who is committed to achieving as much as possible whether it be in the classroom or on the mat. This is exactly what attracted heavyweight recruit Paul Snyder to them. While an outstanding high school wrestler, he showed his true colors in the State tournament his junior year. During this tournament he was upset by the eventual champion; however, Paul refused to quit and battled back to take third with true urgency. Between that, his interest in the Hofstra program and its tradition of producing great wrestlers, Snyder was what Shifflet called a "no-brainer, we have high expectations for Paul."

When explaining the recruiting process, he said how it is imperative that the head coach have a strong relationship with the athlete; however, the recruiting duties fall upon his entire staff. Assistant coach Rob Anspach, a Pennsylvania native, contributes his unique knowledge of Pennsylvania wrestling while Joe Dubuque does the same for New Jersey and Shifflet, the same for New York. One of the most significant obstacles faced by the coaching trio is the steep price tag for their private institution. At forty one thousand dollars, even if the staff can produce a three quarter scholarship for their athlete, it is still cheaper for that wrestler to attend a program such as Edinboro University. With only 9.9 scholarships for a roster of twenty four, the student athlete who receives scholarships for academics becomes that much more appealing. Even against this adversity, Hofstra is still able to recruit some of the top wrestlers in the northeast.

Believe it or not, there are ways that the Hofstra faithful can aid the program in its recruiting process. Shifflet explains that while he appreciates the interest and support he receives from the Hofstra fans. He is disheartened by the number of negative comments his team attracts on various internet forums. Not only does this information reach his recruits and negatively affect their decision, it couldn't be farther from the truth. Shifflet urges the fans to support his team whether it is on the internet or at home dual meets. "Wrestling is not immune to the economic hardships facing our nation today, now more than ever we need to support our sport. With various wrestling programs being cut from universities, something as simple as attending a match or writing a letter to the Athletic Director thanking him for the schools support could really go a long way," Says Coach Shifflet.

Fundraising is just another duty that falls upon the head coach. There are two major components of next season's fundraising efforts. This year Hofstra has created a new program

known as W.I.N. Access to this organization is gained by making a one-hundred dollar donation, and pledging anywhere from 1-5 dollars for each individual win that a Hofstra wrestler produces. The second phase is gathering additional funds for the new Hofstra wrestling facility being constructed this October. The Teague Ryan memorial fund will also go towards this new facility. This memorial fund seems a fitting tribute to the boy who spent so much of his time growing up in the Hofstra wrestling room. The new facility located on the second floor of the fitness facility will feature a lounge equipped with computers and video equipment for studying video, and working on homework. Aside from a new wrestling room, there will also be a wrestling exclusive training room equipped with both cardio and strength training equipment. With new offices for his coaching staff adjoining the wrestling room, Shifflet feels this first class facility will attract recruits and take his program to the top in the nation. One of the largest fund raisers for the Teague Ryan dedicated facility will be held on January 25, at 1:00 p.m., when Tom Ryan returns to Hofstra with his second place, Ohio State Buckeyes to face-off against his former team in one of Long Island's most anticipated matches.

Reflecting on his past three years living on Long Island, Coach Shifflet is ecstatic with his decision to move here. While he is happy to be closer to his friends and family, he is possibly just as pleased to coach a program "located in a hotbed of wrestling." In his spare time, Shifflet enjoys fishing and visiting his family in both Buffalo and Florida. When asked if he intends to stay at Hofstra for the long haul or if this is just a stop in the road, Shifflet responded, "Why would I leave? I'm surrounded by friends and family and I coach one of the best programs in the nation. I have no doubt that it can be done, a lot of little things need to fall in place but Hofstra can win a national championship, we just need that winning attitude."

It was evident in speaking with coach Shifflet that he possesses a true passion for bringing the Hofstra program to the top in the nation. If Long Island stands behind its wrestling team and shows the support I know it's capable of, I'm sure one day coach Shifflet's dream will become a reality. Go Pride.